

Dear Mother,

Wednesday, September 26
Nagasaki, Japan

Sunday morning we steamed into this port with the Second Marine Division. Ours was the flagship for the squadron of 21 transports and two destroyers. The headquarters battalion was on our ship and consequently we had many high ranking officers on board. The stateroom which I share has a third bunk, above mine, right under the overhead which a Marine Lieutenant Colonel had for our trip. When he came into the room at Saipan and asked which bunk was to be his, the lower two bunks being the only ones made up, I pointed to the top one and told him he would have to take that one. I think that set the proper tone for our trip to Nagasaki, for he proved to be good company, and every night about ten he had some friends in for drinks, and magazines (my room-mate) or I would arrange ice for him. I wouldn't trouble you with this story but it ties in with what happened this afternoon, the best shore-leave, or

more accurately, shore - without - leave the
ever had.

The part of Japan I've seen is truly a
picturesque and beautiful country.
It is mountainous around here in a way
that reminds me of the country we've
driven through in Pennsylvania, out
of Pittsburgh going East. The mountains
have but few trees, a small, asymmetrical
kind of pine, and are terraced to an almost
ridiculous extent, wherever the rise of
the hills will allow terracing. The average
terrace will be 15 or 20 feet wide, and
~~the~~ with a 3 feet rise to the next
terrace. Most of the crops around
here are a Japanese kind of potatoe,
though I suppose they may raise ^{many} more
other crops here, including tea and
rice. The mountains go right to the
water's edge, and if they weren't green
with vegetation the harbor entrance
would be very like an Iceland fjord.
There were two light raids by B-29's
here that hit the Mitsubishi shipyard

and machine shop, well firebombed, and pretty well destroyed, mostly burned, everything that was hit. One series of ways had about 12 or midget submarines, some which appeared about completed. No one ~~was~~ is working in this area of the harbor, and it looks like the workers dropped their tools where they were when V-J day came.

As you know this city is where the second and more powerful atomic bomb was dropped. As it was exploded inland it didn't affect the harbor area much except to break windows and collapse an occasional building that was built in lathe-and-plaster fashion.

We have been busy since coming here unloading supplies and troops in landing boats while moored fore-and-aft to mooring buoys about 100 yards from the docks proper. No liberty has been granted, and it's unlikely anyone will get ashore in the few days

remaining here, except for a small company on the docks where the troops and supplies are disembarked.

Having that in mind Maginnis, ^{one} another officer, and I went ashore this afternoon.

One of the colonels that had been in our stateroom many times very kindly lent us his jeep, with his driver, and we went on a 3 hour conducted ~~to~~ tour of the city, the whole area ~~affected~~ destroyed by the atomic bomb, and the part of the city still restricted ^{for} military personnel, which is where most of the still living Japanese are ~~now~~ quartered.

The damage caused by the atomic bomb is beyond any description. Every living thing for several miles along that particular valley most certainly was killed. The part of Nagasaki still standing was saved by the mountainous terrain that confined the blast to one valley and sheltered the parts which led off in other directions.

The only things still standing are an occasional small tree trunk, no more than 15 feet high, which could bend over with the blast, or rarely, a stone wall of a building that stretched length-wise in line with the direction of the blast. There are two or three of these walls standing, and two or three concrete-reinforced smoke stacks, one of which is bent to a precarious angle. Next to the road in the midst of this wreckage are rows of drill presses and the latter bolted in concrete; they represent the only evidence of what before was a factory perhaps the size of the Harvester plant there at home. All else in that area is completely flattened, burned, and destroyed. From the center the outer edges of the blast area can be found by the direction the telephone poles lean and ~~the~~ ^{which} sides are blackened and burned by the heat.

Back on a hill and partly protected was a large building, modern and substantial ^{where} that we stopped and walked

through. The walls and roof were still intact, but inside everything that wasn't of stone, steel, or concrete was burned up. It was either a hospital, a school, or perhaps an apartment house. We saw a stapling machine and a date stamp, the only things we could identify.

It probably isn't known yet how many were killed. The only estimate I have heard was 30 thousand, and 50 thousand injured which are still cared for ~~here~~ in Nagasaki. There must be a great lack of medicine, the water system is in bad shape, and how they find enough to eat is a mystery. The roads to and from the bombards are lined with men, women, and children carrying bits of salvaged goods in packs on their backs, or pulling ~~as~~ carts and wagons. The more fortunate ones have a horse to do the pulling. All look very poor, the lowest phase of the destitution they have known all their lives. The men and women go about their

work with states, experiences given, and
as we rode by they would stop to watch
us closely. They seem very anxious to
please us, and when we would stop one
to ask questions he would come ~~far~~ to
the jeep smiling. He would have one
of those ~~out~~ extremely funny conversations
where he would act as though he knew
exactly what we meant and then answer
us in the purest Japanese. We would
likewise look understandingly and ask
more questions. After five minutes of
this, in which ^{we} made friendly and
what appeared to be courteous sounds
toward each other we would drive off,
he saluting us and we answering our
~~so~~ bonhomie best, smiles all around
from ear to ear. The children either
stand very straight and salute us or
yell and cheer like kids do everywhere,
proving that no one small has a nationality
and only the grown up children make
war.

It will interest you to know that the Second Division, after fighting many of the worst battles of the war and leaving many of ~~their~~^{its} men buried on Pacific battlegrounds, wishes to make its occupation as correct and painless as possible. At least that is what the rank and file wish, and the captains and colonels I've talked to say the same. I have yet to hear anyone here speak vindictively or talk about revenge. Every last rifle and shell, every thing military is to be melted down or taken out and sunk — that will be done with a vengeance. The Japanese military will be given a hard time, probably, but they are past reclaiming anyway. The Americans here are going about this thing in a Christian way, it seems to me.

I think of you often, let me hear from you. Joe Parker